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Digitizing European Industry

working Group on industrial platforms

Session on Smart Agriculture

 21 October 2016

farmers PERSPECTIVES on digital platforms

From 8:30 to 13:00

Location: Centre Borschette

Speech delivered by Daniel Azevedo (5 minutes)

Present: CEMA, AIOTI

Session co-chair by Joel Bacquet (DG CONNECT) and Ana Cuadrado (DG AGRI)

The Working Groups consist of representatives from national initiatives, public-private partnerships and competent experts

**Aim of the meeting**

* Where do we stand today on digital platforms in agriculture?
* What do farmers need Digital platforms to deliver?
* Major challenges & What is missing to close the gap?
* Access to new technologies
* Investment at farm level and infrastructure
* Training and transfer of technology
* Build up trust in the system

Ladies and Gentleman’s,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide farmers and agri-cooperatives perspective on digitising agriculture. The remarks I am about to make are the main conclusions of the European farmers Congress that took place early this month. The ongoing digital transformation of agriculture was one of the key topics.

 “Connected farmers” are currently using sophisticated smart farming techniques in a wide range of sectors, such as livestock, dairy, crops and mediterranean products. Let me provide you with one quick example: today, dairy robots are helping farmers to skip certain routine tasks, focusing their precious time on the farm management.

Agri-cooperatives are implementing new and in some cases disruptive business models, based on digital models. In this respect, cooperatives play an essential role, because they already provide these services to farmers, they can for example process and store data from them as the higher value comes for aggregated data, providing new advisory services and helping farmers to negotiate better contractual arrangements with input suppliers.

So, what is the most important benefit that farmers and agri-cooperatives need technology and innovation to deliver? It can…

…help tackle higher prices volatility… and income volatility!

…improve resource efficiency!

…improve productivity!

…deliver better public services!

…provide tools that increase the knowledge of measures to mitigate climate change and environmental processes!

… decrease red tape and bureaucracy or controls!

…maintain high quality of products!

Technological innovations must deliver…

….more environmentally friendly machines!

….more targeted applications!

….better and more prosperous living conditions for our members!

I am therefore convinced that the use of technology combined with digital transformation could help farmers and agri-cooperatives to step into the future of farming, achieve ambitious targets and respond to dynamic markets!

In order for the farming community to take full advantage of the opportunities of technological and digital transformation, it is necessary to establish appropriate and robust infrastructure. We believe that quality, governance and the organisations involved are all key parts of this infrastructure.

Let me give you an example, the EU Commission demands that all Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) application be completed online by 2018. Nevertheless, even today in the XXI century, in a digital world, many farms face tremendous obstacles to embrace digital transformation due to the lack of proper infrastructure and secure and reliable internet connection in rural areas.

Today we assist to the development of multiple digital platforms in agriculture, developed by some of our partners in the food chain, agri-cooperatives and ICT start-ups.

Copa and Cogeca underscore the importance of agriculture tackling problems of connectivity and interoperability. Assuring total interoperability between the systems based on European standards would provide a big push for the uptake of technological and digital tools by the farming community. This would ensure a level playing field being accessible by all farmers, no matter their size, sector or region of Europe!

Moreover, its fundamental to find the right balance between providing future proof regulatory environment that reflects the changing nature of the technological advancements and creates a level playing field while avoiding excessive burden and protecting the ownership, access and control of data by farmers.

The new data-supply chain places informed farmers in a new context and redefines their role in the supply chain, which will enable transformative agricultural business models to develop, leading to cheaper, safer, and better produce. Nevertheless the farmer remains at the heart of collecting and processing of data.

Our recently adopted position on the matter underlines that all approaches must recognise the right of the farmer to benefit from and be compensated for the use of data produced on the farm or during farming operations, and the need to grant the farmer a leading role in controlling the access to and use of data from his/her farm.

I am convinced that these principles are shared by many of you in this room, and we would like to work together with our partners in the agri-food chain to develop them. This joint effort could shed greater light on contractual relations and provide practical guidance to the all parts involved on the use and exchange of agricultural data by the value chain.

Farmers and agri-businesses are more likely to share data and engage in a more open data mind-set if it is clear what the potential benefits and risks are. This is an important step to promote trust on the system but keeping the farmer at the heart of collection and processing of farm data.

Finally, Providing the right training and education at the right moment will not only help farmers to make the most of these technological opportunities, but will also produce educated digital entrepreneurs and an agricultural workforce that understands their rights and responsibilities in this new digital world.

That’s why Copa and Cogeca’s Task Force on Agri Tech has been focusing on identifying key needs for digital and ICT Skills, in order to help closing the gap between the real needs of the farming community and what the market is able to provide in terms of workforce.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In order to maximise the potential benefits of the technological and digital transformation of agriculture we must have a coherent strategy at EU level and not 28 different plans.

**It is Strategy - Not Technology or digital - the Real Driver for Technological and Digital Transformation.** **A good digital strategy is born out of a vision for the sector.** Copa and Cogeca via our experts of the Task Force on Agricultural Technology will now develop an **Coherent EU Strategy on Technological and Digital Transformation of agriculture.**

Many thanks.

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